



International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour International Labour Office

ROMANIA

AT A GLANCE

May 2002

Background

The transition process in Romania has brought drastic changes in the economic, political, and social environment. From a society with a fairly well developed social welfare infrastructure in which access to education and health care were virtually universal, Romania now faces many serious issues in these areas. Unemployment has increased resulting in average living standards that fall below the poverty line, as well as an increase in social and economic inequality. Economic hardships have undermined traditions and social customs, eroding the protection often provided within a family structure. Most affected have been the traditionally weaker or dependent groups of the society such as children. Child labour, which had largely been prevented in most socialist countries, has been re-emerging in the wake of transition and has become quite a concern for policy makers. However, since there is a lack of knowledge, limited capacity, and no experience regarding child labour issues, neither the government nor the society at large have been able to effectively respond to the problem at hand. Therefore, IPEC assistance is an urgent and real need for the country of Romania.

Romania has ratified various international conventions related to child labour issues: ILO convention 138 (1973) ratified in 1975, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) ratified in 1990, and the Convention 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour in 2000.

Facing inevitable difficulties created by both the old regime and the transition, new measures were adopted in order to address the critical situation of children and families. For example, in 1997, the



Department for Child Protection (DPC) was established aiming to restructure and strengthen the child protection system. Since then, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption (former DPC) – has undertaken the responsibility in elaborating strategies on child protection and implementing policies, and also with the co-ordination role for the activities of the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection (SPSCP) and Child Protection Commissions, established at the local level in 41 counties and six sectors of Bucharest.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Health and Family, and the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption share the responsibility for family and child protection.

The Ministry of Education and Research is committed to implementing a reform programme that promotes universal access to quality primary education for primary school age children. The duration of compulsory education will increase from eight to nine years, ensuring that children remain in school until they have reached the ages of 14/15 starting in 2003.

There is also a dynamic effort underway on the part of NGOs to strengthen the role of civil society. In the field of child protection, there are already a considerable number of NGOs working to provide assistance to working children in difficult circumstances.

IPEC – Romania: Approach and Strategy

The aim of ILO-IPEC country programme is to work toward the progressive elimination of child labour by strengthening the capacity of the nation to deal with the problem. Child labour problems are vast and complex, and long-lasting solutions have to emerge from within the countries themselves. IPEC will facilitate policy reform and changes in social attitudes in the target country that will lead to the sustainable prevention and abolition of child labour.

IPEC aims to assist Romania in the following areas:

- Preventing the increase of child labour in both urban and rural areas;
- Building the capacity of concerned governmental and non-governmental agencies;
- Conducting quantitative and qualitative research to assess the extent and nature of child labour; and
- Raising public awareness about the problem of child labour.

Prevention:

The first priority in Romania is the prevention of child labour in both rural areas and urban centers, before the problem becomes even more widespread. Teachers, local education officers, parents/guardians, children, community leaders, and others in areas where low enrollment and high dropout rates are prevalent will be targeted.

Capacity building for governmental and non-governmental agencies:

To ensure the efficient implementation and long term sustainability of national policy and

programmes to combat child labour, capacity building for the National Steering Committee and key agencies, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption, local Departments for Child Protection, the General Inspectorate of Police and the Institute for Research and Criminality Prevention will be undertaken.

Child labour data:

In addition to the SIMPOC survey carried out by ILO-IPEC and the National Institute for Statistics, important elements of the programme will include qualitative research in selected areas, such as working street children, Roma working children and rural child labour.

Awareness raising:

Public opinion must be mobilized around the issue of child labour. Therefore, child labour has to be put firmly on the public policy agenda and kept there through awareness-raising and social mobilization. Government partners and NGOs are to be involved. In addition, awareness raising among families and schools with high dropout rates and communities with high incidence of child labour and will be conducted. Employers' associations and trade unions' will be supported in their direct action programmes or awareness raising activities. NGOs selected as collaborating partners will benefit from technical and financial assistance to increase their capacity to withdraw working children from the labour force.

IPEC Programme Objectives

Development Objective: This programme will contribute to the prevention and progressive elimination of child labour and the related phenomenon of street children in Romania.

Immediate Objective 1:

By the end of the programme, the government will have: i) updated and approved the National Policy and Plan of Action on child labour developed during the national Seminar in March 1998; ii) harmonized its child labour legislation with international standards; and

iii) developed its institutional capacity to deal with the problem.

Immediate Objective 2:

By the end of the programme, successful pilot projects in Moldavia and southern Romania will have changed attitudes and perceptions about child labour in these regions and have resulted in the effective prevention of child labour and subsequent rehabilitation of a selected number of street children.

Immediate Objective 3:

By the end of the programme, a new approach will have been developed to improve the quality of educational and other protective services catering to the needs of Roma ("Gypsy") working street children and their families by taking into account their specific needs in terms of socio-cultural and psychological characteristics and living circumstances.

Major Achievements

Given the little experience Romania has in dealing with the emerging issue of child labour, policy formulation and legal reform, as well as taking into account that it is the first time that a comprehensive country programme has been introduced in Romania, the overall developments and achievements include the following:

Ratification of ILO Conventions:

- ❑ the ILO Convention 138 in 1975
- ❑ the ILO Convention 182 in 2000

National Steering Committee (NSC):

Established as a coordinating body to oversee the implementation of programme activities on July 4th 2000, the NSC consists of representatives from the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the Labour Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Health and Family, Ministry for European Integration, General Inspectorate of Police, workers' and

employers' organizations, NGOs active in child protection, as well as those from the academia.

Child Labour Units (CLU):

CLUs have been created within the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Labour Inspectorate and National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption.

Intersectoral Central Training Team (ICTT):

Consisting of experts from several governmental and non-governmental agencies, workers' and employers' organizations, established and trained on investigating and monitoring child labour, including project design, management, monitoring and evaluation.

Child Labour Data:

Through the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), ILO provides technical and financial support for data collection and the development of a database on child labour. With this support, the National Institute for Statistics has been able to conduct a National Survey on child labour and three rapid assessments/baseline surveys on specific target groups. Selections from these studies are presented as follows:

• WORKING STREET CHILDREN

Out of 150 street children working more than eight hours a day: 44% beg in difficult conditions (unbearable heat or very low temperatures), most of them suffering of skin diseases, TB, hepatitis; 93% of them have dropped out school, most of them at about the age of 11; 34% are illiterate; 40% have low writing and reading capability; 49% were beaten at least once; and 63% are frequently insulted by their employers. From the study we find that children are exposed to major risks of being involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing, prostitution, and pornography. (*Rapid Assessment of the situation of working street children in Bucharest, 2001, Save the Children Romania*)

• RURAL CHILD LABOUR

Over 70% of 400 children between ages 6 and 14 from Vaslui, Botosani, Suceava, Ialomita and Calarasi counties consider it normal for them to work. The daily activities established by their parents include cleaning the house, cooking, feeding animals, cleaning the stables, coops, pigsty, caring of younger siblings, different agricultural work, milking the cow, chopping woods, etc. 64% of children stated they worked for a "local employer". 63% of these children said that their parents didn't let them to go to school because they needed money. *(Baseline Survey on rural child labour in five selected counties in Romania, Ecaterina Stativa, the Institute for Mother and Child Protection)*

• ROMA CHILD LABOUR

Roma children's involvement in work in order to contribute to the family income is a tradition. In the selected communities, Ferentari - Bucuresti, Calvini – Buzau County and Pata Rat – Cluj County, children work within the household (cleaning, caring for younger siblings) and/or participate together with their parents in agricultural activities, production or sale of various goods, collecting recyclable materials, working in squares/warehouses, construction or in the street (begging, washing car windshields). Working hours range between 4-10 hours a day. The working conditions are intolerable and the risks of accident, sickness or of involvement in illegal activities (prostitution, drug dealing) are very high. The schooling situation of the interviewed children is as follows: 67.4% go to school; 13.5% dropped out temporarily, and 19.1% are not enrolled in the education system. *(Report on the socio-cultural characteristics and living conditions of Roma working (street) children and/or involved in other hazardous works - Sorin Cace, ECHOSOC Foundation in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Research, UNICEF and the PHARE Programme on the Improvement of Roma situation)*

Mainstreaming Child Labour in Legislation

[The National Strategy on Child Protection \(2001-2004\) and the Operational Plan for Implementation:](#)

Approved by the Government (Decision 539/14.06.01) the strategy recognizes child

labourers as a specific category of beneficiaries to be dealt with for the first time in Romanian legislation. The strategy includes: revision and improvement of the legal framework; establishment of local services in order to eliminate exploitation of child labour; awareness raising of the public on any type of abuse, neglect and exploitation; design and implementation of action programmes aiming at the elimination of child labour; make known the good practices and lessons learned in respecting and promoting child's rights.

[A new organic law \(No. 678/2001\):](#)

Prevention and combating trafficking in persons, the law was promulgated and published in the Official Monitor of Romania, No. 783 on 11th of December 2001. This law includes special provisions regarding trafficking of minors and the use of children in pornography. There are provisions referring to exploitation through forced labour, slavery, prostitution, and activities violating fundamental human rights and freedoms and penalties are more severe, particularly when the victims are children under age fifteen.

[Governmental Ordinance Nr. 89/2001](#)

Instituted for reviewing and improving the Criminal Code concerning the offences concerning sexual life (art. 198 and 202), including an increase in the severity of penalties regarding sexual offences against minors.

[The Ministry of Public Administration Ordinance No. 4425/2001:](#)

Concerning the organization of drug prevention and illegal use, which establishes an Interministerial Commission for drug abuse prevention consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Youth and Sports and local centres for prevention and counselling coordinated by the Prefect offices in each county and Bucharest.

Study on the current Romanian legislation regarding child labour and recommendations on the necessary amendments for its approximation with the international regulations.

In the context of the governmental efforts aiming at harmonizing national legislation with EU and international regulations in order to properly address child issues, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, in collaboration with ILO-IPEC, is currently conducting a comparative Study on the current Romanian legislation. The study, including recommendations on harmonizing the national legislation with international standards, will contribute to the prevention and progressive elimination of child labour in Romania by improving the national legal and institutional framework, increasing the awareness on the basic legal protection of children in relation to work and advocating for legislative change.

Programmes and Projects

Aside from legislation, one of the most important and powerful instruments in combating child labour are currently addressed within the framework of the action programmes and projects in order to eliminate the worst forms of child labour:

Direct support to working children:

“Integrated programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in three selected metropolitan areas in Romania by 2002”

A minimum of 500 working street children will be withdrawn from work and related hazards and rehabilitated through a package of education, counselling, vocational training, health services, and nutrition within this action programme, implemented by Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania). Up to now, 238 working street children from Bucharest, Craiova and Iasi have been included in the programme activities, out of which 173 children, 125 boys and 48 girls, have been withdrawn from hazardous works.

“Prevention of children from dropping out school in order to start work”

Targets 100 children, boys and girls, between the ages of 6 and 15 years from two selected pilot schools from both urban (Bucharest) and rural areas who come from families with socio-economic difficulties, at high risk of dropping out school and deprived of adult supervision. Basic education programmes are provided within selected schools such as: doing homework, outside assistance by tutors/teachers for catching up with the school requirements, didactic tests, tuition, etc. in order to optimise children's school performance and prevent them from dropping out. Additional assistance for children and their siblings through extra-curricular activities, weekend courses and counselling for parents are also provided. The International Federation of the Educative Communities Romania is the implementing agency for this action programme.

Capacity Building and Awareness Raising:

Completed Action Programmes:

- Initial training of Child Labour Units' members and Intersectoral Central Training Team (ICTT) on investigating and monitoring child labour, including project design, management, monitoring and evaluation, EQUILIBRE Association, 2000.
- Labour inspectors trained to fight against the worst forms of child labour, Labour Inspectorate, 2001.
- Police officers of the General Inspectorate of Police trained to act against the worst forms of child labour implemented by ARIADNA Association (NGO), 2002
- Strengthened the capacity of the Confederation of Romanian Democratic Trade Unions to combat the worst forms of child labour, implemented by CSDR, 2002
- Enhanced the capacity of Roma communities in selected areas for the withdrawal of Roma working children from the streets and/or other hazardous

work implemented by ECHOSOC Foundation (NGO), 2002.

Ongoing action programmes

- Integrated programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in three selected metropolitan areas in Romania by 2002 implemented by Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), 15.07.2001-31.12.2002
- Enhancing the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Research to increase the attendance, retention and performance rates of children in order to prevent and eliminate rural child labour implemented by the MER and the CEPD Step-by- Step, 1.11.2001 – 31.10. 2002.
- Strengthening the capacity of the key personnel from the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection (SPSCP) to combat the worst forms of child labour implemented by the International Foundation for Child and Family (IFCF) and the NACPA, 1.01-31.12.2002.
- The IPEC Romania Newsletter, in electronic format (English and Romanian versions) for local IPEC partners, UN agencies, World Bank, the Delegation of the European Commission in Romania, and media. 96 recipients are included on the mailing list.

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